

## ABSTRACT

An Internet access device employs a method for managing electronic mail messages for multiple users of the device. When one user retrieves his or her messages over a distributed computer network, such as the Internet, the device also  
5 retrieves status information regarding the remaining users' unread email messages.

This enables the device to inform the other users as to their unread email. A computer-readable storage medium for storing data for access by a computer program being executed on a user interface device includes at least two data structures. A first data structure stored on the medium provides for retrieving  
10 electronic mail messages addressed to one of the users. A second data structure stored on said medium provides for retrieving status information regarding any unread electronic mail messages addressed to any remaining users. A system containing a user interface for recipients of electronic mail messages includes a processing unit, system memory, an I/O device, a system bus and an email program  
15 module. The system bus couples together the processing unit, system memory, and input/output device. The electronic mail program module is stored in the system memory and is operative to retrieve over a distributed computer network electronic mail messages addressed one of the users, as well as to retrieve status information regarding any unread electronic mail messages addressed to any other users.